Met Office

NEWS

Climate change increases the risk of wildfires

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Rapid Response Review shows human-induced climate change promotes the conditions on which wildfires depend, increasing their likelihood.

In light of the Australian fires, scientists from the University of East Anglia (UEA), Met Office Hadley Centre, University of Exeter, Imperial College London, and CSIRO Oceans and Atmosphere, have conducted a Rapid Response Review of 57 peer-reviewed papers published since the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report in 2013.

All the studies show links between climate change and increased frequency or severity of fire weather - periods with a high fire risk due to a combination of high temperatures, low humidity, low rainfall and often high winds - though some note anomalies in a few regions.

Professor Richard Betts, Head of Climate Impacts Research at the Met Office Hadley Centre and co-author of the report, said: “Fire weather does occur naturally but is becoming more severe and widespread due to climate change. Limiting global warming to well below 2°C would help avoid further increases in the risk of extreme fire weather.”

The full report is hosted on the ScienceBrief website and can be accessed here.

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